

to keep the roof up. At first, half of the coal only was taken out ; but after some progress had been made the pillars were reduced in size, so as to let a third more of the seam be removed. This, of course, was a delicate operation, since the desire to get as much coal out of the mine as possible led to the risk of paring down the pillars so far as to make them too weak for the enormous weight they had to bear. Such a failure of support leads to a "crush." The weakened pillars are crushed to fragments, and at the same time the floor of the pit, under the enormous and unequal pressure, is here and there squeezed up even to the roof. Such was the disaster that now befell the coal-pit of Kilgrammie. It had been the early disturbance of level heralding the final catastrophe that sent the empty waggon along the roadway.

For a couple of days cracks and grinding noises went on continuously in the pit, the levels of the rails got more and more altered, and though the men remained at work, it became hourly more clear that part of the workings would now need to be abandoned. At last, on the 8th October, the final crash came suddenly and violently. The huge weight of rock under which the galleries ran settled down solidly on them with a noise and shock which, spreading for a mile or two up and down the quiet vale of the Girvan, were set down at the time as the passing of an earthquake. Over the site of the mine itself the ground was split open into huge rents for a space of several acres, the dam of a pond gave way, and the water streamed off, while the horses at the mouth of the pit took fright, and came scampering, masterless and in terror, into the little village, the inhabitants of which rushed out of doors, and were standing in wonderment as to what had happened.

But the disasters above ground were only a feeble indi-